

God Has a Son

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[0 : 0 0] Well, it would be great if you took out your Bible and turned to 2 Samuel 7, which is page 259-260. And as you do that, I want to say that you, while I know we shouldn't say that one chapter in the Bible is any better than others, but this is better.

It's probably the best chapter up till now, actually. Finally, it's the peak and pinnacle of the story of God from creation with his world. In this chapter, God reveals eternal commitments to us, to his people.

It's wider, higher, deeper. I was going to have six points. Wider, higher. I was going to preach on those points. It's a key passage about Jesus. And we love this passage.

It's very precious to Christians because Jesus is precious. And it's for every single person. It doesn't matter your background. It doesn't matter your hopes or what you believe, really. Look at verse 9 to the top of page 260, halfway through the passage.

King David says, This is instruction for mankind. And in the Hebrew, it's a bit stronger than that. It's literally, this is law for humanity.

[1 : 1 5] In other words, the promises that God makes in the first half of the chapter, in David's mind, are like a charter, like a constitution for what God is going to do with all humanity and with creation.

So it doesn't matter really what you believe. You can be an atheist, Muslim, Hindu. It doesn't matter what you think, really. In David's view and in the Bible's view, this is good news.

This is the gospel for the whole world. And the chapter opens, verses 1 to 3, previously on 2 Samuel. Remember the king, David, greatly loved.

He now rules over his undisputed king over a united Israel. He's living in a big, lavish house in his fortress city with gifts from nations round about. And the presence of God was danced in, in front of the ark, when Dan preached two weeks ago.

Wasn't it disappointing that Dan didn't do the dancing? I've seen Dan in an ephod. Okay, verses 1 to 3.

[2 : 2 2] Now, when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar.

House of cedar, that's like, that's right up there. But the ark of God dwells in a tent. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that's in your heart. The Lord is with you.

You've got to love David, haven't you? I mean, he is fabulously successful and humble. You can resent people who are successful but not humble.

But he knows the success he had has come from God. And he's ambitious for God's name. He says, I'm living here in this house that's worth millions.

It's got huge marble bathrooms. But the ark of God, it's down there in a dingy tent. The people of God have got no cathedral, no temple to worship in.

[3 : 20] Very tempting to stop here and preach a sermon. Let me tell you, I spoke to the treasurer about it last week. Say we should begin a campaign right now to buy a property and build a cathedral.

And I can tell you what we'd call the campaign, Don't Rent or Tent, Location is Vocation. How about that? Point out that we're all politely concerned and interested in ourselves, but it's a true mark of the spirit to be interested in the affairs of God.

But I won't do that because that would be to rip this out of its context. It's true. David wants to put his money where his faith is. He does not feel good about the fact that he has it all, while the cause of God seems to be at a low ebb.

He knows his success has come from God, so he goes to the prophet and says, I want to build something for God. And the prophet says, that's such a good idea. I don't even need to pray about this.

Go for it. But God has other plans. As is usually the case, God has other plans. As we come into this chapter, if you've been with us for a while, it's completely different.

[4 : 24] There's no chasing, intrigue, beheading, witches. It's two speeches. A speech from God in the first half of the chapter. It's astounding and astonishing promise.

And then the second half of the chapter is David's prayer. And they're the prayers of a man who's been gripped by grace. And he is literally flabbergasted. It's a good word. He's lost for words.

And my prayer this morning is that you too will be flabbergasted as I've been, as we look at this. Three things about God come to us in this passage.

Three things to hold on to. And the first is the humility of God. So Nathan goes home that night.

And that night in verse 4, the word of the Lord comes to Nathan. And in verse 6 onwards, as it was read, this is what God basically says. He says to Nathan, say to David, I chose to live in a tent with my people of Israel in the wilderness.

[5 : 26] They were a pilgrim people. I'm a pilgrim God. Remind him that back in Deuteronomy 12, I said that when the people of God enter into the land that I'm going to give you, I'm going to move about the land in the tent and I'm not going to settle down until I'm good and ready.

And the reason for that is that the land is mine, but the land right now is full of false idols and false worship. And I need to go around the land cleaning it up.

Your job, Israel, is whenever you find an idol and a false god, chop it up, use it as firewood. My job is to disinfect the land, to purify it by my presence.

Incidentally, that is one of the reasons why when Jesus came, throughout his ministry, he is constantly casting out unclean demons.

He's doing the same thing the Lord did, the Lord God. He moved about the land, cleansing it. Do you hear what God is saying here? He's saying, I am not like any God. I will not be worshipped through idols or icons.

[6 : 32] I don't need a special temple. I don't need a cathedral to keep the rain off my head. I am the Lord. I'm not suffering because I don't have a house of cedar, as though I'm missing out.

He says to David, I'm staying in the tent. The strange humility of God. He did not need to create the world. He did not need to create you and me because he was lonely.

He doesn't need our worship as though he is insecure. That's the pagan view of God. The pagan view of God is that the gods need us to do things for them.

You know, we build them temples, we make offerings to them so they might be good to us. And the ancient world is filled with ziggurats and temples, has temples for gods to live in.

The God of the Bible, he won't be confined to any building. The God of the Bible is not like a West Coast God who lives in nature and lives in trees. He does not need our lavish plans.

[7 : 33] It's an important word for us. It's a constant temptation for the people of God to try and domesticate him, to imagine that he wants what we want. To take our expectations and put them on him, to want him to settle down on our plans and on our buildings, to make golden calves and say, let's worship this.

The Apostle Paul said later on in the Bible, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, he does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Or perhaps even better, the words of God himself in Isaiah, heaven is my throne, earth is my footstool, what is the house you would build for me? What is the place of my rest?

All these things my hand has made, all these things came to be, declared the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

That's the one he looks to because he is the humble God. And he lets David down very gently. He says in verse 9, if you just cast your eye down, he says, David, I have been with you wherever you went.

[8 : 51] When you faced big Goliath, I was with you. When Saul tried to skewer you with his spear, I was with you. When you hid in the cave, when you ran off to Philistines, I was with you.

This is the humility of God. He is constantly coming down to be with us so as to rescue us and to save us and to bring us home. And I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but it is a great act of humility to do this.

You think of the burning bush and the smelly sheep paddock out there in the wilderness. The bush burns among the sheep dung. And when God came down on the pillar of fire and cloud on the tent in the wilderness, it was amid the smell of burning carcasses.

And finally, when we come to the Gospel of John, we read that the Word was with God, the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.

And the Word dwelled is literally the Word pitched his tent. In Jesus Christ, God came from heaven and pitched his tent and camped among us.

[10 : 01] He's not like other gods, you see. And when Jesus rose from the dead, you remember, he said to his followers, I will be with you always to the end of the age. He says, Since the death and resurrection and coming of Jesus, things have changed for us.

There's no tent. There's no temple. God's presence doesn't come and go. But he dwells in us, plural, together, by his Holy Spirit.

That's God's humility. That's the first thing we take from this passage. And the second is the grace of God. The grace of God. You can't miss this.

As the passage is read, one of the key words in the passage is the word house. It's used 15 times. And if I can say this reverently, God makes a play on the word house.

Because you see, house can mean two different things. It can mean a physical building with walls and roof and rooms. Or it can mean a household of people, a family, a dynasty, the house of Windsor.

[11 : 05] So look at how God does this. In verse 5, if you just cast your down, the right-hand column on page 259. Go and tell my servant David, Thus says the Lord, Would you build me a house to dwell in?

That's a physical building. Down in verse 11. The Lord, last line, the Lord declares to you, the Lord will make you a house.

Not a physical house. He's talking about an eternal home, a family, a dynasty. This is the grace of God. David thought he was doing the big thing for God.

But it's God who's doing the really big thing. God is going to give to David and his people an eternal household, a place, a dwelling where God himself will dwell with him.

Not because David deserves it, but simply because of his grace. And you know, this is God's intention when he made the world. He made us. He created us in his image so that he might dwell with us.

[12 : 12] The world is meant to be like a home, a household, an eternal place where we live in shalom, peace with each other and with this world and with God himself. And that's what God's doing.

That's the plan of God. The picture that we have at the end of the world, sorry, at the end of the Bible and the end of the world is of a new Jerusalem. And we read, God, the new Jerusalem has become the dwelling place of God and God will dwell with us and we shall be his people and God himself will be with us as our God.

One of the things that we hear about Vancouver constantly, this is beautiful and everyone's very rich, but it's a lonely place. And I think the alienation and homelessness that many of us sense is answered by what God promises here, that he will be our true home that even though we've done nothing to deserve it, he's creating a house for us, a place of belonging, an eternal place of belonging and by his grace, he is going to bring it about.

We don't build his kingdom. He is building it. And I think if you're someone who thinks about these things afterwards, you should take this passage home with you.

Just trace through in the first half of the passage how often God speaks about himself I, me, my. In that little section of 12 verses, I counted 31 times.

[13 : 42] He tells David what he did in the past, what God did in the past, what he's going to do in the future and then what he's going to do in the eternal future. Let me read a couple of verses. Verse 8, halfway through, thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be a prince over my people Israel.

By the way, I think he's called prince because God is the true king. And I've been with you wherever you went, cut off all your enemies from before you. I will make for you a great name like the names of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel. I will plant them so that they will dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more, etc. See, everything that's happened to David is not because David was such a great guy and particularly virtuous.

He's not. It's all of God's grace. It was God who took him from the field. It was God who gave him the gift of music. It was God who anointed him Messiah. And God doesn't do these things just because he's nice.

He's doing it for the sake of his people. God keeps doing these things. He keeps working for the sake of his people. And I think David has a sense of this just flick over to the right hand to the next page in his prayer.

[15 : 05] In verse 23 this is David's flabbergasted prayer. He says, Who is like your people Israel? The one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt a nation and its gods.

And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God.

This is just great stuff. Israel is uniquely privileged not because they were important or any great sheikhs in themselves but purely because of God's undeserved kindness.

God went. He went and redeemed them and brought him to himself so that they would be his people. There's a two-directional thing going on here.

They would be his people and he would be their God like a marriage. Not because they're attractive or numerous or brilliant or had more potential than others but it was purely because of grace.

[16 : 13] I've said this before but if you would forgive me for being personal for a moment. This passage 2 Samuel 7 is very important in my own life.

It turned my view of God and of Christianity completely on its head. I'd grown up in a Christian family. I'd been around church a lot. Done a lot of ministry. I was even at seminary.

I went to seminary to get a deeper grasp of my faith not to go into the ministry. I was determined never to go into the ministry. But all along I had a sneaking suspicion that I was fooling myself.

I was plagued with doubts. Not so much about whether God was there but about whether my faith was real. I was trying to live the Christian life.

I was trying to do things for God and it just it wasn't working. I was failing abjectly at it. And I recently found some fairly anguished journals from that time which I'm not going to let you see but they're pretty honest.

[17 : 22] And I write things like I don't love God as I should. My life is shot through with disobedience. My performance is spotty at best. My hold on God was touch on go.

My faith was up and down. And I vividly remember I was at seminary and I went along to an Old Testament class. And I used to sit in the back left corner to make a very quick exit afterwards.

And I was not expecting much in Old Testament exegesis. And we came to 2 Samuel 7 and somewhere in the middle of that class the teacher simply said in the Bible it's not what we do for God that's important.

It's what God does for us. I'd probably heard it a hundred times before but God spoke to me and everything kind of flipped up the right way.

I had been living as though it depended on my faith and my work and my love and in just a moment it became clear to me that what's really important is God's faithfulness and God's work and God's love.

[18 : 27] And I think it's very easy to get hold to the wrong end of the stick with this. You can be around Christianity and Christians for a long time and still be on that desperate treadmill of trying to save yourself with all your best intentions.

And the signs that you're trying to save yourself are these that you lack in your heart an assurance of God's forgiveness and of his grace. You try and obey God by looking at the boundaries you know the rules the laws rather than trying to please him.

Grace is more about what you do than what he does and your inner life frankly is grumpy. Praise is just unnatural and joy is elusive. And I don't know if this is you but if this is you here is God's promise I will be your God you shall be my people I am your true home and the way into that true home come to me and I will give you rest.

And I don't want to give anyone the false impression or wrong impression my life is still spotty and very shot through with disobedience. Not as bad as Dan but I'm just kidding.

What's different is where the confidence lies. What matters is not really my performance but God's grace. And I've come to learn the guilt of very poor long term motivator.

[19 : 53] Grace is not such a good short term motivator but a very good long term one. None of us fully understand God's grace to us. If you've never been you know we sang that hymn before the sermon about ecstasy written 1600 years ago.

If you don't have that sort of ecstasy let me encourage you to take this verse and meditate on it. It comes from 2 Corinthians 8-9 2 core 8-9 It says this You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich.

And you can see how it affects David. He goes in and he sits before the tent and he says Who am I and what's my family that you've done this O Lord? He's just gobsmacked.

He's thunderstruck. He's flabbergasted. Notice please in the prayer he doesn't grovel. He doesn't I'm unworthy I'm unworthy Of course he's unworthy and so are you.

That's not really relevant to this. The point is he's seen the grace of God and it's difficult for him to find words. For us as a community of Christians St. John's the question for us is is God the same today?

[21 : 14] Has his grace gone on the back burner? Is his grace is he going to continue to be gracious to us or has it lost its edge? Of course he will.

So the humility of God the strange humility of God the wonderful grace of God and finally thirdly the covenant of God and in a minute I'm going to get you Bible flicking just in case your hands might have gone to sleep.

A few years ago I read War and Peace I was travelling a lot and anyway you wouldn't call War and Peace a comedy exactly but at the end of it there's some very funny stuff.

Tolstoy says that the big turning points in world history are due to idiotic and inhumane decisions made by people who have not a clue what they're doing.

That's his argument and I think it's a good theory I don't think it's almost impossible to deny that theory. 2 Samuel 7 it's different. This turning point for the world comes from the God who knows the future who controls the future and promises the future because you see the way God's humility and his grace comes to us is through his promises and there's a very particular kind of promise here and that is a covenant promise.

[22 : 37] This is a Bible word covenant and it's a two-sided contract but it's not a business contract it's not dry like that it's more like a marriage where God binds himself to us and binds us to himself and this passage is the covenant with David and the idea of covenant is a way of looking at the whole Bible.

If you're new to Christianity you know the Bible divides into Old Testament and New Testament that's Old Covenant and New Covenant and when you look in detail there are actually six covenants.

Creation is a covenant where God promises blessing and rest. Then there's Noah. Then there's Abraham where God promises to make a people and to put them in a place and to bless them with his presence and to make them a blessing to all people.

And then there's Moses where God shows how precious his people are to him and comes to dwell with them. And then finally in the Old Testament the fifth covenant is David this Davidic covenant.

And then when we come to the New Testament of course Jesus Christ brings the new covenant. They're not all separate covenants. It's basically one covenant from God. It's one plan and purpose for God.

[23 : 50] And each time he re-establishes the covenant that he made at creation God picks up and takes the most wonderful and brilliant things that he's promised and heightens them and adds to them and redirects them and deepens them.

That's why through this passage there are a number of echoes from those other passages and from those previous promises rest a nation etc.

But there are two things about the David covenant that are completely new. The first is it's eternal. Look down at verse 12 please. verse 16 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Verse 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me your throne shall be established forever.

So here is God making these promises about 1000 BC and they come to us now through the person of Jesus Christ in fulfilment. They come through the 21st century where we live and they go right out beyond the end of the world into eternity into the future to come and it's God who's making this promise of the forever king.

[25 : 19] So death cannot defeat it and time cannot terminate it but God's promise you see is that this world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ and the Christ shall reign forever.

It's eternal. That's the first new thing. The second new thing is that it has to do with an eternal king. King. I know kings are unpopular. Monarchies generally unpopular.

Although it's having a resurgence in Australia very strangely which I don't quite understand. We think democracy is the best form of government don't we because we have such a high view of ourselves but this king is completely unique.

Look down at verse 13 No, 14 I'm sorry. 14. God says I will be to him a father and he will be to me a son.

How much is in that say I promise eh? When he commits iniquity I will discipline him with the rod of men with the stripes of the sons of men but my steadfast love will never depart from him.

[26 : 24] From this day onward from 2 Corinthians to Samuel 7 onwards we are looking for an eternal king. From this day onwards God will relate to his people through the anointed son of David whose job it will be to be the son of God.

I want to push this with you. The way God is going to create an eternal house and home for us the way he's going to redeem us the way he's going to bring us to peace all hinges on the coming son of David who will be an eternal Messiah.

See? Very important. That is why all the Bible is so focused on the person of Jesus Christ. That's why Christians are focused on the person of Jesus the Messiah. He is the touchstone of humanity.

He is the key to human destiny. He's the key to human happiness. He's the key to the future. And the tragic thing is is that when you look at the kings that come after David I mean even David it's dire.

Three chapters from now David gets himself into a real mess and most of the kings are pretty abject. Self-absorbed, corrupt living off the sheep like wolves.

[27 : 37] What's even worse is that in 400 years time because of the decay and corruption in Israel the Babylonians come they completely conquer Israel they kill all of the royal family and they take the people into exile.

And the great question for God's people out there in Babylon in exile is how can this happen? How can it happen God when you've promised that the house and kingdom of David are going to be made sure forever?

How can it happen? Well now it's time to flick. If you keep your finger into Samuel 7 and turn right to Psalm 89 page 495 I think this psalm was likely written during the time of exile.

Now the psalm is struggling with this very issue. You look at verse 3 the psalmist says God you've said I made a covenant with my chosen one I have sworn to David my servant I will establish your offspring forever and build your thrones for all generations Selah What's Selah I mean Dan?

Nobody knows Nobody knows but you said it faithfully I must say I think it might have to do with the eye thing what was that? The melting eye The melting eye I thought that might be it Where were we?

[28 : 58] Okay verse 8 the psalmist says Lord of hosts you're mighty your faithfulness is around you you've got what it takes you can fulfil this if you want verse 28 this is what you said Lord my steadfast love I will keep for him forever my covenant will stand firm for him I will establish his offspring forever his throne as the days of the heavens verse 38 but now you've cast off and rejected you're full of wrath against your anointed verse 44 you've made his splendor to cease you've cast your throne to the ground verse 51 the enemies mock your Messiah see the problem?

you don't have much choice do you with God's promise in 2 Samuel 7 either God didn't really mean it he's not up to keeping it or there's something bigger going on and if you chose C chocolate cigar because as we read through the later prophets in the Old Testament we find that God brings together two things he brings together his own personal rule of his people and one particular son of David and they become the same person let me show you this just turn right again to Isaiah chapter 9 for a moment very familiar very familiar words this is a great Christmas reading which you know well I'm sure but look at who is promised verse 6 for to us a child is born okay so it's a human child the son is given and the government that's the kingdom of God will be on his shoulders and what is this child this human's child name his name shall be called wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace this child this human child who's born who carries the kingdom is God of the increase of his government and of peace there is no end it's eternal on the throne of David he's the son of David and of his kingdom to establish and uphold it with justness perfection righteousness from this time forth forevermore you see we could do the same in the book of Ezekiel we could do the same in the book of Jeremiah so one more flick we go over to the

New Testament to the beginning of Luke's gospel and in Luke's gospel in verse 26 Luke chapter 1 26 in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed her name was Mary and what does this angel Gabriel say to her verse 31 behold you'll conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus who is this child he will be great he will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end it's as though Gabriel is reading from 2 Samuel 7 and in the person of Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant we have the fulfillment of creation and all our hopes and all the building of God and our future and our destiny rests on him the humble God the God of grace it's flabbergasting but I think flabbergasting is not where we should finish is it

David after he hears that he goes into the tent he sits down he's just he's very moved I don't think we've grasped a shred of God's goodness to us if you're unmoved by this you can't receive this coldly it's overwhelmingly good news and what David does is he pleads God's promises back to him Lord do as you've promised which is what we've done already in this service and what we're going to do in just a moment but the thing about these great promises and purposes of God is you can understand them but there's another step isn't there you can understand them and even rejoice in them but you can reject them or you can accept them and the thing with a covenant like a marriage is that one partner will give themselves to the other but it takes two to make a full covenant and all his humility and all his goodness and grace are of no effect unless you give yourself to him he's accepted you he's taken hold of you he's made promises to you now it's your turn to accept him and we do this with great joy together as we turn to prayer now let's just bow our heads shall we turn toeten and all his coming up our heads

SOLT to take out both of our heads or to help us thank you to■ is that's how I audience will hear thank you the student me and then through the two enduring to your